

By MICHAEL KNOX: Wycombe Wanderers 0, Enfield 1

WYCOMBE WANDERERS succumbed to their second defeat of the season at the hands of Isthmian League champions Enfield on Saturday at Loakes Park when one piece of cold calculation proved to be the difference between the sides in a dull encounter of the first kind.

For much of the game Enfield seemed to be out on a spring walk on a sunny April day as they strolled through this game. True, they did not have everything their own way but when it came to the killer punch seven minutes from time, they proved lethal.

The man who supplied that final thrust that took the champions even further out in front, was their number ten Steve King who rounded off a brilliant individual performance with a goal taken in the coolest manner imaginable.

Wycombe, leading on corners as the match seemed to be drifting to a goalless draw, were on the attack when King broke down the right from half way with only goalkeeper John Maskell standing between him and the goal.

Maskell, in the side for the injured Peter Spittle, appeared slow in coming off his line, but narrowed King's angle sufficiently seemingly to prevent a goal. But King slipped along the by-line behind Maskell and evaded the challenge of Richard Strong before tapping the ball coolly home.

In the closing moments that former Wycombe man Keith Searle could have increased the margin when put clear, but whether through generosity or carelessness I do not know, he shot straight at the grateful Maskell.

But Searle could be forgiven that miss for he has become something of a lucky mascot for sides chasing the Isthmian title. In the past eight years, he has been in the championship winning side a remarkable seven times — four times for Wycombe and now three with Enfield.

And it's not all just a coincidence for his goal scoring feats are legendary. This season has been a poor one for him with just 16, but he has still done enough to keep leading scorer Tony Bass on the sidelines in recent games.

He is one member of a highly efficient unit who have lost only twice in the league this season. Saturday's game should have been their hardest of the lot, but Wycombe lacked both the talent up-front and strength in midfield to make the most of their obvious home advantage.

Blues' main aim of course now is to complete a hat-trick of second places. With this in mind they will be hoping for the swift return of left back Bobby Davies who missed recent games because of a family illness.

His replacement in these matches has been young Richard Strong, normally a centre-back. His lack of experience — both at this high level and in a relatively unaccustomed position — showed through with lack of control — particularly in his distribution. Having said that I think he could be a very fine centre-back in a couple of years time.

It would be unfair to single out Strong for criticism, because the defence as a whole was Wycombe's best unit. Keith

Mead enjoyed an excellent game, several times appearing from 'nowhere' to save dangerous situations.

Upfront Wycombe created several good chances but as so often failed to put them away. They came nearest scoring just before the interval when Derek Harris hit the near post from a desperately narrow angle. The ball ran across the face of the goalmouth but there was no one there to apply the finishing touch.

That was the story on several promising Wycombe attacks — lack of support at the vital moment. The one exception came on the hour when Paul Birdseye and Mackenzie combined brilliantly down the right to make an opening for Tony Horseman but Bodger's final shot was well saved by Terry Moore.

For a spell in the second half Enfield who had dictated the early stages of the match, went off the boil and produced one or two ugly fouls. Mark Wright was lucky to escape a caution when bringing down Dylan Evans on the edge of the penalty area. Judging by the place Evans rubbed when he rose from the ground, Wright could well have been shown the yellow card.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, R. Strong, K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Priestley, G. Mackenzie, M. Hollifield, D. Harris, D. Evans, A. Horseman. Sub: R. Day (not used).

ENFIELD: T. Moore; M. Wright, J. Tone, T. Jennings, K. Elley, R. Howell, M. O'Sullivan, J. Knapman, K. Searle, S. King, J. Bishop. Sub: A. Bass (not used).

Referee: G. J. Prevett (New Malden).

Scorer: Enfield — King (83 mins).



ENFIELD defenders close in as Wycombe Wanderers striker Tony Horseman, receives the ball five yards from goal. However, he was unable to control the ball and this chance was lost in Saturday's 1-0 defeat at Loakes Park.